

SONGS  
*for a*  
LITTLE  
HOUSE

*By*  
CHRISTOPHER MORLEY















SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE  
BY CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

*Books by*  
**CHRISTOPHER MORLEY**

**MINCE PIE**

**THE ROCKING HORSE**

**SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE**

**PARNASSUS ON WHEELS**

**SHADYGAFF**

**THE HAUNTED BOOK SHOP**

# SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

BY  
CHRISTOPHER MORLEY



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## TO THE LITTLE HOUSE

DEAR little house, dear shabby street,  
Dear books and beds and food to eat!  
How feeble words are to express  
The facets of your tenderness.

How white the sun comes through the pane!  
In tinkling music drips the rain!  
How burning bright the furnace glows!  
What paths to shovel when it snows!

O dearly loved Long Island trains!  
O well remembered joys and pains. . . .  
How near the housetops Beauty leans  
Along that little street in Queens!

Let these poor rhymes abide for proof  
Joy dwells beneath a humble roof;  
Heaven is not built of country seats  
But little queer suburban streets!

Albany Avenue, Queens, Long Island,  
March, 1917



## ONE MOMENT, PLEASE

**A**T fifty cents per agate line  
Kind editors will buy your verse;  
They'll make you swear that you resign  
All claims, for better or for worse.  
The book, dramatic, photoplay,  
And interplanetary rights  
They seize; but do not feel dismay—  
Their barks are fiercer than their bites!

I thank, for leave to print these rhymes,  
And for unfailing courtesy,  
*Everybody's, New York Times,*  
*The Outlook* and the *Century*;  
*The Boston Transcript, L. H. J.,*  
*The Tribune, Mail, and Evening Post,*  
*The Book News Monthly*, chastely gay—  
But *Life* and *Collier's* I thank most.

The *Independent* and *McClure's*  
And *Argosy* have borne my flights:  
Dear scribblers, how this reassures—  
Their barks are fiercer than their bites!



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SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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*“He that high growth on cedars did bestow,  
Gave also lowly mushrumps leave to grow.”*

—R. Southwell, 1562-95

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## SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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### BAYBERRY CANDLES

DEAR sweet, when dusk comes up the hill,  
The fire leaps high with golden prongs;  
I place along the chimneysill  
The tiny candles of my songs.

And though unsteadily they burn,  
As evening shades from grey to blue  
Like candles they will surely learn  
To shine more clear, for love of you.

### SECRET LAUGHTER

“I had a secret laughter.”

—Walter de la Mare.

**T**HERE is a secret laughter  
That often comes to me,  
And though I go about my work  
As humble as can be,  
There is no prince or prelate  
I envy—no, not one.  
No evil can befall me—  
By God, I have a son!

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SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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A CHARM

For Our New Fireplace,  
To Stop Its Smoking

O WOOD, burn bright; O flame, be quick;  
O smoke, draw cleanly up the flue—  
My lady chose your every brick  
And sets her dearest hopes on you!

Logs cannot burn, nor tea be sweet,  
Nor white bread turn to crispy toast,  
Until the charm be made complete  
By love, to lay the sooty ghost.

And then, dear books, dear waiting chairs,  
Dear china and mahogany,  
Draw close, for on the happy stairs  
My brown-eyed girl comes down for tea!

### SIX WEEKS OLD

**H**E is so small, he does not know  
The summer sun, the winter snow;  
The spring that ebbs and comes again,  
All this is far beyond his ken.

A little world he feels and sees:  
His mother's arms, his mother's knees;  
He hides his face against her breast,  
And does not care to learn the rest.

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## SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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### THE YOUNG MOTHER

**O**f what concern are wars to her,  
Or treaties broken on the seas?  
Or all the cruelties of men?  
She has her baby on her knees.

In blessed singleness of heart,  
What heed has she for nations' wrath?  
She sings a little peaceful hymn  
As she prepares the baby's bath.

As in a dream, she hears the talk  
Of mine, torpedo, bomb and gun—  
She shudders, but her thoughts are all  
Encradled with her little son.

### PETER PAN

“The boy for whom Barrie wrote Peter Pan—the original of Peter Pan—has died in battle.”

—New York Times.

**A**ND Peter Pan is dead? not so!  
When mothers turn the lights down low  
And tuck their little sons in bed,  
They know that Peter is not dead. . . .

That little rounded blanket-hill;  
Those prayer-time eyes, so deep and still—  
However wise and great a man  
He grows, he still is Peter Pan.

And mothers' ways are often queer:  
They pause in doorways, just to hear  
A tiny breathing; think a prayer;  
And then go tiptoe down the stair.

THE 5:42

**L**ILAC, violet, and rose  
Ardently the city glows;  
Sunset glory, purely sweet,  
Gilds the dreaming byway-street,  
And, above the Avenue,  
Winter dusk is deepening blue.

(Then, across Long Island meadows,  
Darker, darker, grow the shadows:  
Patience, little waiting lass!  
Laggard minutes slowly pass;  
Patience, laughs the yellow fire:  
Homeward bound is heart's desire!)

Hark, adown the canyon street  
Flows the merry tide of feet;  
High the golden buildings loom  
Blazing in the purple gloom;  
All the town is set with stars,  
*Homeward* chant the Broadway cars!

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## SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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### THE 5:42—(continued)

All down Thirty-second Street  
*Homeward, Homeward*, say the feet!  
Tramping men, uncouth to view,  
Footsore, weary, thrill anew;  
Gone the ringing telephones,  
Blessed nightfall now atones.  
Casting brightness on the snow  
Golden the train windows go.

Then (how long it seems) at last  
All the way is overpast.  
Heart that beats your muffled drum,  
Lo, your venturer is come!  
Wide the door! Leap high, O fire!  
Home at length is heart's desire!  
Gone is weariness and fret,  
At the sill warm lips are met.  
Once again may be renewed  
The conjoined beatitude.

READING ALOUD

ONCE we read Tennyson aloud  
In our great fireside chair;  
Between the lines, my lips could touch  
Her April-scented hair.

How very fond I was, to think  
The printed poems fair,  
When close within my arms I held  
A living lyric there!

### THE MOON-SHEEP

THE moon seems like a docile sheep,  
She pastures while all people sleep;  
But sometimes, when she goes astray,  
She wanders all alone by day.

Up in the clear blue morning air  
We are surprised to see her there,  
Grazing in her woolly white,  
Waiting the return of night.

When dusk lets down the meadow bars  
She greets again her lambs, the stars!

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## SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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### MAR QUONG, CHINESE LAUNDRYMAN

I LIKE the Chinese laundryman:

He smokes a pipe that bubbles,  
And seems, as far as I can tell,  
A man with but few troubles.

He has much to do, no doubt,  
But also, much to think about.

Most men (for instance I myself)  
Are spending, at all times,  
All our hard-earned quarters,  
Our nickels and our dimes:  
With Mar Quong it's the other way—  
He takes in small change every day.

Next time you call for collars  
In his steamy little shop,  
Observe how tight his pigtail  
Is coiled and piled on top.  
But late at night he lets it hang  
And thinks of the Yang-tse-kiang.

THE MILKMAN

EARLY in the morning, when the dawn is on the roofs,

You hear his wheels come rolling, you hear his horse's hoofs;

You hear the bottles clinking, and then he drives away:

You yawn in bed, turn over, and begin another day!

The old-time dairy maids are dear to every poet's heart—

I'd rather be the dairy *man* and drive a little cart,  
And bustle round the village in the early morning blue.

And hang my reins upon a hook, as I've seen Casey do.

IN HONOUR OF TAFFY TOPAZ

**T**AFFY, the topaz-coloured cat,  
Thinks now of this and now of that,  
But chiefly of his meals.  
Asparagus, and cream, and fish,  
Are objects of his Freudian wish;  
What you don't give, he steals.

His gallant heart is strongly stirred  
By clink of plate or flight of bird,  
He has a plumpy tail;  
At night he treads on stealthy pad  
As merry as Sir Galahad  
A-seeking of the Grail.

His amiable amber eyes  
Are very friendly, very wise;  
Like Buddha, grave and fat,  
He sits, regardless of applause,  
And thinking, as he kneads his paws,  
What fun to be a cat!

### THE CEDAR CHEST

HER mind is like her cedar chest  
Wherein in quietness do rest  
The wistful dreamings of her heart  
In fragrant folds all laid apart.

There, put away in sprigs of rhyme  
Until her life's full blossom-time,  
Flutter (like tremulous little birds)  
Her small and sweet maternal words.

O PRAISE ME NOT THE COUNTRY

O PRAISE me not the country—  
The meadows green and cool,  
The solemn glow of sunsets, the hidden silver pool!  
The city for my craving,  
Her lordship and her slaving,  
The hot stones of her paving  
For me, a city fool!

O praise me not the leisure  
Of gardened country seats,  
The fountains on the terrace against the summer  
heats—  
The city for my yearning,  
My spending and my earning.  
Her winding ways for learning,  
Sing hey! the city streets!

O praise me not the country,  
Her sycamores and bees,  
I had my youthful plenty of sour apple trees!

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SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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O PRAISE ME NOT THE COUNTRY—(continued)

The city for my wooing,  
My dreaming and my doing;  
Her beauty for pursuing,  
Her deathless mysteries.

O praise me not the country,  
Her evenings full of stars,  
Her yachts upon the water with the wind among  
their spars—  
The city for my wonder,  
Her glory and her blunder,  
And O the haunting thunder  
Of the Elevated cars!

### ANIMAL CRACKERS

**A** NIMAL crackers, and cocoa to drink,  
That is the finest of suppers, I think;  
When I'm grown up and can have what I please  
I think I shall always insist upon these.

What do *you* choose when you're offered a treat?  
When Mother says, "What would *you* like best to  
eat?"

Is it waffles and syrup, or cinnamon toast?  
It's cocoa and animals that *I* love most!

The kitchen's the cosiest place that I know:  
The kettle is singing, the stove is aglow,  
And there in the twilight, how jolly to see  
The cocoa and animals waiting for me.

Daddy and Mother dine later in state,  
With Mary to cook for them, Susan to wait;  
But they don't have nearly as much fun as I  
Who eat in the kitchen with Nurse standing by;  
And Daddy once said, he would like to be me  
Having cocoa and animals once more for tea!

### THE WAKEFUL HUSBAND

HOW blue the moonlight and how still the night.  
Silent I ramble through the whole dear house  
Setting aright in happy ownership  
Whatever may lie out of its due place.  
Books in the living room I rearrange,  
Then in the dining room my pewter mugs,  
And put her little brown nasturtium bowl  
Where she can see it when she telephones.  
Up in my den the papers are a-sprawl  
And litter up my desk: these too I sort  
Thinking, to-morrow I will rise betimes  
And do my work neglected. . . . Tiptoe then  
I pass into the Shrine. She is asleep,  
Dark hair across the moon-blanced pillow slip.  
Her eyes are sealed with peace, but as I touch  
The girlish cheek, her lips are tremulous  
With secret knowing smiles. In her boudoir  
(Her "sulking room" I call it: did you know  
It means that?) I wind up the tiny clock  
And stand at her Prayer Window where the fields

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## SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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### THE WAKEFUL HUSBAND—(continued)

Lie listening to the crickets and the stars. . . .  
Alas, I only hear the throb of pain  
That echoes from the moonlit fields of France.

Into our kitchen, too, I love to go,  
Straighten the spoons against our break of fast,  
Share secrets with our dog, the drowsy-eyed,  
Surprise the kitten with some midnight milk.  
The pantry cupboard, full of pleasant things,  
Attracts me: there I love to place in line  
The packages of cereals, or fill up  
The breakfast sugar bowl; and empty out  
The icebox pan into the singing night.

Then, as I fixed the cushions on the porch,  
I wondered whether God, while wandering  
Through his big house, the World, householderwise,  
Does also quietly set things aright,  
Gives sleep to sleepless wives in Germany  
And gently smooths the battlefields of France?  
Dear Father God, the children in their play  
Have tossed their toys in saddest disarray—  
Wilt Thou not, like a kindly nurse at dusk,  
Pass through the playroom, make it neat again?

*September, 1914.*

**LIGHT VERSE**

**A**T night the gas lamps light our street,  
Electric bulbs our homes;  
The gas is billed in cubic feet,  
Electric light in ohms.

But one illumination still  
Is brighter far, and sweeter;  
It is not figured in a bill,  
Nor measured by a meter.

More bright than lights that money buys,  
More pleasing to discerners,  
The shining lamps of Helen's eyes,  
Those lovely double burners!

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SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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### FULL MOON

THE moon is but a silver watch  
To tell the time of night;  
If you should wake, and wish to know  
The hour, don't strike a light.

Just draw the blind, and closely scan  
Her dial in the blue:  
If it is round and bright, there is  
A deal more sleep for you.

She runs without an error,  
Not too slow nor too quick,  
And better than alarum clocks—  
She doesn't have to tick!

### MY WIFE

PURE as the moonlight, sweet as midnight air,  
Simple as the primrose, brave and just and  
fair,

Such is my wife. The more unworthy I  
To kiss the little hand of her by whom I lie.

New words, true words, need I to make you see  
The gallantry, the graciousness, that she has  
brought to me;  
How humble and how haughty, how quick in thought  
and deed,  
How loyally she comrades me in every time of need.

To-night she is not with me. I kiss her empty dress.  
Here I kneel beside it, not ashamed to bless  
Each dear bosom-fold of it that bears a breath of  
her,  
Makes my heart a house of pain, and my eyes a  
blur.

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SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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MY WIFE—(continued)

Here I kneel beside it, humble now to pray  
That God will send her back to me on the morrow  
day.

New words, true words, only such could praise  
The blessèd, blessèd magic of her dear and dauntless  
ways.

### WASHING THE DISHES

WHEN we on simple rations sup  
How easy is the washing up!  
But heavy feeding complicates  
The task by soiling many plates.

And though I grant that I have prayed  
That we might find a serving-maid,  
I'd scullion all my days, I think,  
To see Her smile across the sink!

I wash, She wipes. In water hot  
I souse each dish and pan and pot;  
While Taffy mutters, purrs, and begs,  
And rubs himself against my legs.

The man who never in his life  
Has washed the dishes with his wife  
Or polished up the silver plate—  
He still is largely celibate.

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SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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WASHING THE DISHES—(continued)

One warning: there is certain ware  
That must be handled with all care:  
The Lord Himself will give you up  
If you should drop a willow cup!

### THE FURNACE

**A**T night I opened  
The furnace door:  
The warm glow brightened  
The cellar floor.

The fire that sparkled  
Blue and red,  
Kept small toes cosy  
In their bed.

As up the stair  
So late I stole,  
**I**said my prayer:  
*Thank God for coal!*

### THE CHURCH OF UNBENT KNEES

**A**S I went by the church to-day  
I heard the organ cry;  
And goodly folk were on their knees,  
But I went striding by.

My minster hath a roof more vast:  
My aisles are oak trees high;  
My altar-cloth is on the hills,  
My organ is the sky.

I see my rood upon the clouds,  
The winds, my chanted choir;  
My crystal windows, heaven-glazed,  
Are stained with sunset fire.

The stars, the thunder, and the rain,  
White sands and purple seas—  
These are His pulpit and His pew,  
My God of Unbent Knees!

## THE NEW ALTMAN BUILDING

Madison Avenue and Thirty-fourth Street  
(January, 1914)

**F**LED is the glamour, fled the royal dream,  
Fled is the joy. They work no more by night  
Deep in that cave of dazzling amber light,  
In pools of darkness, under plumes of steam.  
Gone are the laughing drills that sting and hiss  
Deep in the ribs of the metropolis.

Gone are the torches and the great red cranes  
That swung their arms with such resistless might;  
Gone are the flags and drums of that great fight,  
No more they swink with rocks and autumn rains;  
And only girders, rising tier on tier,  
Give hint of all the struggle that was here.

We too, mad zealots of the hardest craft,  
Striving to build a word-house fair and tall,  
Have wept to see our dear erections fall;  
Have wept—then flung away our tools, and laughed.  
Fled is the dream, but working year by year  
We see our buildings rising, tier on tier.

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## SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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### THE MADONNA OF THE CURB

ON the curb of a city pavement,  
By the ash and garbage cans,  
In the stench and rolling thunder  
Of motor trucks and vans,  
There sits my little lady,  
With brave but troubled eyes,  
And in her arms a baby  
That cries and cries and cries.

She cannot be more than seven;  
But years go fast in the slums,  
And hard on the pains of winter  
The pitiless summer comes.  
The wail of sickly children  
She knows; she understands  
The pangs of puny bodies,  
The clutch of small hot hands.

In the deadly blaze of August,  
That turns men faint and mad,

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SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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THE MADONNA OF THE CURB—(continued)

She quiets the peevish urchins  
By telling a dream she had—  
A heaven with marble counters,  
And ice, and a singing fan;  
And a God in white, so friendly,  
Just like the drug-store man.

Her ragged dress is dearer  
Than the perfect robe of a queen!  
Poor little lass, who knows not  
The blessing of being clean.  
And when you are giving millions  
To Belgian, Pole and Serb,  
Remember my pitiful lady—  
Madonna of the Curb!

### MY PIPE

**M**Y PIPE is old  
And caked with soot;

My wife remarks:  
"How can you put  
That horrid relic,  
So unclean,  
Inside your mouth?  
The nicotine  
Is strong enough  
To stupefy  
A Swedish plumber."  
I reply:

"This is the kind  
Of pipe I like:  
I fill it full  
Of Happy Strike,  
Or Barking Cat  
Or Cabman's Puff,  
Or Brooklyn Bridge  
(That potent stuff)

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SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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MY PIPE—(continued)

Or Chaste Embraces,  
Knacker's Twist,  
Old Honeycomb  
Or Niggerfist.

I clamp my teeth  
Upon its stem—  
It is my bliss,  
My diadem.  
Whatever Fate  
May do to me,  
This is my favourite

B  
B B.  
For this dear pipe  
You feign to scorn  
I smoked the night  
The boy was born.\*

TO A GRANDMOTHER

**A**T six o'clock in the evening,  
The time for lullabies,  
My son lay on my mother's lap  
With sleepy, sleepy eyes!  
(*O drowsy little manny boy,*  
*With sleepy, sleepy eyes!*)

I heard her sing, and rock him,  
'And the creak of the swaying chair,  
'And the old dear cadence of the words  
Came softly down the stair.

'And all the years had vanished,  
All folly, greed, and stain—  
The old, old song, the creaking chair,  
The dearest arms again!  
(*O lucky little manny boy,*  
*To feel those arms again!*)



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A HANDFUL OF SONNETS

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## A HANDFUL OF SONNETS

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I

I HAVE no hope to make you live in rhyme  
Or with your beauty to enrich the years—  
Enough for me this now, this present time;  
The greater claim for greater sonneteers.  
But O how covetous I am of NOW—  
Dear human minutes, marred by human pains—  
I want to know your lips, your cheek, your brow,  
And all the miracles your heart contains.  
I wish to study all your changing face,  
Your eyes, divinely hurt with tenderness;  
I hope to win your dear unstinted grace  
For these blunt rhymes and what they would express.  
Then may you say, when others better prove:—  
“*Theirs for their style I'll read, his for his love.*”

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SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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II

WHEN all my trivial rhymes are blotted out,  
Vanished our days, so precious and so few,  
If some should wonder what we were about  
And what the little happenings we knew:  
I wish that they might know how, night by night,  
My pencil, heavy in the sleepy hours,  
Sought vainly for some gracious way to write  
How much this love is ours, and only ours.  
How many evenings, as you drowsed to sleep,  
I read to you by tawny candle-glow,  
And watched you down the valley dim and deep  
Where poppies and the April flowers grow.  
Then knelt beside your pillow with a prayer,  
And loved the breath of pansies in your hair.

PEDOMETER

MY thoughts beat out in sonnets while I walk,  
And every evening on the homeward street  
I find the rhythm of my marching feet  
Throbs into verses (though the rhyme may balk.)  
I think the sonneteers were walking men:  
The form is dour and rigid, like a clamp,  
But with the swing of legs the tramp, tramp, tramp  
Of syllables begins to thud, and then—  
Lo! while you seek a rhyme for *hook* or *crook*  
Vanished your shabby coat, and you are kith  
To all great walk-and-singers—Meredith,  
And Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Keats, and Rupert  
Brooke!  
Free verse is poor for walking, but a sonnet—  
O marvellous to stride and brood upon it!

ARS DURA

HOW many evenings, walking soberly  
Along our street all dappled with rich sun,  
I please myself with words, and happily  
Time rhymes to footfalls, planning how they run;  
'And yet, when midnight comes, and paper lies  
Clean, white, receptive, all that one can ask,  
'Alas for drowsy spirit, weary eyes  
And traitor hand that fails the well loved task!

Who ever learned the sonnet's bitter craft  
But he had put away his sleep, his ease,  
The wine he loved, the men with whom he laughed,  
To brood upon such thankless tricks as these?  
And yet, such joy does in that craft abide  
He greets the paper as the groom the bride!

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## A HANDFUL OF SONNETS

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### O. HENRY—APOTHECARY

“O. Henry” once worked in a drug-store in Greensboro, N. C.

WHERE once he measured camphor, glycerine,  
Quinine and potash, peppermint in bars,  
And all the oils and essences so keen  
That druggists keep in rows of stoppered jars—  
Now, blender of strange drugs more volatile,  
The master pharmacist of joy and pain  
Dispenses sadness tinctured with a smile  
And laughter that dissolves in tears again.

O brave apothecary! You who knew  
What dark and acid doses life prefers,  
And yet with friendly face resolved to brew  
These sparkling potions for your customers—  
In each prescription your Physician writ  
You poured your rich compassion and your wit!

FOR THE CENTENARY OF KEATS'S  
SONNET (1816)

“On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer.”

I KNEW a scientist, an engineer,  
Student of tensile strengths and calculus,  
A man who loved a cantilever truss  
And always wore a pencil on his ear.  
My friend believed that poets all were queer,  
And literary folk ridiculous;  
But one night, when it chanced that three of us  
Were reading Keats aloud, he stopped to hear.

Lo, a new planet swam into his ken!  
His eager mind reached for it and took hold.  
Ten years are by: I see him now and then,  
And at alumni dinners, if cajoled,  
He mumbles gravely, to the cheering men:—  
*Much have I travelled in the realms of gold.*

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## A HANDFUL OF SONNETS

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### TWO O'CLOCK

**N**IGHT after night goes by: and clocks still  
chime

And stars are changing patterns in the dark,  
And watches tick, and over-puissant Time  
    Benumbs the eager brain. The dogs that bark,  
The trains that roar and rattle in the night,  
    The very cats that prowl, all quiet find  
And leave the darkness empty, silent quite:  
    Sleep comes to chloroform the fretting mind.

So all things end: and what is left at last?  
    Some scribbled sonnets tossed upon the floor,  
A memory of easy days gone past,  
    A run-down watch, a pipe, some clothes we wore—  
And in the darkened room I lean to know  
    How warm her dreamless breath does pause and  
        flow.

### THE COMMERCIAL TRAVELLER

A H very sweet! If news should come to you  
Some afternoon, while waiting for our eve,  
That the great Manager had made me leave  
To travel on some territory new;  
And that, whatever homeward winds there blew,  
I could not touch your hand again, nor heave  
The logs upon our hearth and bid you weave  
Some wistful tale before the flames that grew. . . .

Then, when the sudden tears had ceased to blind  
Your pansied eyes, I wonder if you could  
Remember rightly, and forget aright?  
Remember just your lad, uncouthly good,  
Forgetting when he failed in spleen or spite?  
Could you remember him as always kind?

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## A HANDFUL OF SONNETS

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### THE WEDDED LOVER

I READ in our old journals of the days  
When our first love was April-sweet and new,  
How fair it blossomed and deep-rooted grew  
Despite the adverse time; and our amaze  
At moon and stars and beauty beyond praise  
That burgeoned all about us: gold and blue  
The heaven arched us in, and all we knew  
Was gentleness. We walked on happy ways.

They said by now the path would be more steep,  
The sunsets paler and less mild the air;  
Rightly we heeded not: it was not true.  
We will not tell the secret—let it keep.  
I know not how I thought those days so fair  
These being so much fairer, spent with you.

TO YOU, REMEMBERING THE PAST

WHEN we were parted, sweet, and darkness  
came,

I used to strike a match, and hold the flame  
Before your picture; and would breathless mark  
The answering glimmer of the tiny spark  
That brought to life the magic of your eyes,  
Their wistful tenderness, their glad surprise.

Holding that mimic torch before your shrine  
I used to light your eyes and make them mine;  
Watch them like stars set in a lonely sky,  
Whisper my heart out, yearning for reply;  
Summon your lips from far across the sea  
Bidding them live a twilight hour with me.

Then, when the match was shrivelled into gloom,  
Lo—you were with me in the darkened room.

### THE LAST SONNET

**S**UPPOSE one knew that never more might one  
Put pen to sonnet, well loved task ; that now  
These fourteen lines were all he could allow  
To say his message, be forever done ;  
How he would scan the word, the line, the rhyme,  
Intent to sum in dearly chosen phrase  
The windy trees, the beauty of his days,  
Life's pride and pathos in one verse sublime.  
How bitter then would be regret and pang  
For former rhymes he dallied to refine,  
For every verse that was not crystalline. . . .  
And if belike this last one feebly rang,  
Honour and pride would cast it to the floor  
Facing the judge with what was done before.



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## THE WAR

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## THE WAR

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### IRONY

Anton Lang, the *Christus* of Oberammergau, has not been called upon to fight in the German army.

NEWS ITEM.

**S**O War hath still some ruth? some sense of shame?

The Crown of Thorns hath reverence even now?  
For when the summons to that village came,  
They spared the Christ of Oberammergau.

Enlist the actors of that sacred mime—

Paul, Peter, Pilate—Judas too, I trow;  
Spurn Christ of Galilee, but (O sublime!)  
Revere the Christ of Oberammergau.

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SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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TO A FRENCH BABY

Marcel Gaillard, Baby number 6 in *Life's* fund for  
French war-orphans

WHAT unsaid messages arise  
Behind your clear and wondering eyes,  
O grave and tiny citizen?  
And who, of wise and valiant men,  
Can answer those mute questionings?  
I think the captains and the kings  
Might well kneel in humility  
Before you on your mother's knee,  
As knelt, beside a stable door,  
Other great men, long before.

In you, poor little lad, one sees  
All children and all mothers' knees:  
All voices inarticulate  
That cry against the hymns of hate;  
All homes, by Thames or Rhine or Seine,  
Where cradles will not rock again.

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THE WAR

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AFTER HEARING GERMAN MUSIC

WHAT pang of beauty is in all these songs,  
Flooding the heart with painful bliss  
within—

Was this the folk to which Von Kluck belongs,  
The land of poison gas and Zeppelin?

Most gifted race the world has ever known,  
Now bleeding in the dust of rank despairs,—  
Was it for this men builded at Cologne,  
Kant wrote at midnight, Schumann dreamed his  
airs?

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SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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IN MEMORY OF THE AMERICAN  
AVIATORS KILLED IN FRANCE

NOT at their own dear country's call,  
But answering another voice,  
They gave to Liberty their all,  
Nor faltered in the choice.

Their young and ardent hearts were coined  
Into a golden seal for France;  
Above their graves two flags are joined;  
They lie beyond mishance.

'And we, remembering whence came  
Our Goddess where the sea-tide runs,  
Nobly acquit the noble claim  
France has upon our sons.

Who dies for France, for us he dies,  
For all that gentle is and fair:  
God prosper, in those shell-torn skies,  
Our chivalry of air.

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## THE WAR

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### THE FLAGS ON FIFTH AVENUE

**A**BOVE the stately roofs, wind-lifted, high,  
A lane of vivid colour in the sky,  
They ripple cleanly, seen of every eye.

This is your flag: none other: yours alone:  
Yours then to honour: and where it is flown  
By your devotion let your heart be known.

Feeble the man who dare not bow the knee  
Before some symbol greater far than he—  
This is no pomp and no idolatry.

Emblem of youth, and hope, and strength held true  
By honour, and by wise forbearance, too—  
God bless the flags along the Avenue!

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SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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“THEY”

WHOSO has gift of simple speech  
Of measured words and plain,  
To him be given it to teach  
The sadness of Lorraine.

She asked but sun and rain to bless  
Her blue enfolding hills,  
And time, to heal the old distress  
Of dim-remembered ills.

The fields, the vineyards and the lathe,  
The river, loved so well—  
O sunset pools and lads that bathe  
Along the green Moselle.

One whispered word—curt, bitter, brief,  
Lives now in black Lorraine,  
One word that sums her whole of grief—  
Dead children, women slain.

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## THE WAR

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“THEY”—(continued)

The curé's blood that stained the road,  
The village burned away,  
The needless horrors men abode  
Are all in one word—*they*.

### BALLAD OF FRENCH RIVERS

O F streams that men take honour in  
The Frenchman looks to three,  
And each one has for origin  
The hills of Burgundy;  
And each has known the quivers  
Of blood and tears and pain—  
O gallant bleeding rivers,  
The Marne, the Meuse, the Aisne.

Says Marne: “My poplar fringes  
Have felt the Prussian tread,  
The blood of brave men tinges  
My banks with lasting red;  
Let others ask due credit,  
But France has me to thank;  
Von Kluck himself has said it:—  
I turned the Boche’s flank!”

Says Meuse: “I claim no winning,  
No glory on the stage,  
Save that, in the beginning

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## THE WAR

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### BALLAD OF FRENCH RIVERS—(continued)

I strove to save Liége.  
Alas that Frankish rivers  
Should share such shame as mine—  
In spite of all endeavours  
I flow to join the Rhine!"

Says Aisne: "My silver shallows  
Are salter than the sea,  
The woe of Rheims still hallows  
My endless tragedy.  
Of rivers rich in story  
That run through green Champagne,  
In agony and glory  
The chief am I, the Aisne!"

Now there are greater waters  
That Frenchmen all hold dear—  
The Rhone, with many daughters,  
That runs so icy clear;  
There's Moselle, deep and winy,  
There's Loire, Garonne and Seine,  
But O the valiant tiny—  
The Marne, the Meuse, the Aisne!

### PEASANT AND KING

What the Peasants of Europe Are Thinking

YOU who put faith in your banks and brigades,  
Drank and ate largely, slept easy at night,  
Hoarded your lyddite and polished the blades,  
Let down upon us this blistering blight—  
You who played grandly the easiest game,  
Now can you shoulder the weight of the same?  
Say, can *you* fight?

Here is the tragedy: losing or winning  
Who profits a copper? Who garners the fruit?  
From bloodiest ending to futile beginning  
Ours is the blood, and the sorrow to boot.  
Muster your music, flutter your flags,  
Ours are the hunger, the wounds, and the rags.  
Say, can *you* shoot?

Down in the muck and despair of the trenches  
Comes not the moment of bitterest need;  
Over the sweat and the groans and the stenches

---

## THE WAR

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### PEASANT AND KING—(continued)

There is a joy in the valorous deed—

But, lying wounded, what one forgets

You and your ribbons and d——d epaulettes—

Say, do *you* bleed?

This is *your* game: it was none of our choosing—

We are the pawns with whom you have played.

Yours is the winning and ours is the losing,

But, when the penalties have to be paid,

We who are left, and our womenfolk, too,

Rulers of Europe, will settle with you—

You, and your trade.

*October, 1914.*

### TILL TWISTON WENT

**T**ILL Twiston went, the war still seemed  
A far-off thing: a nightmare dreamed,  
Some bruit or fable half-believed,  
Too hideous to be conceived.

His letter came: the memories throng  
Of days that made the friendship strong—  
The oar he won, the ties he wore,  
His love of china, fairy lore,  
(And flappers); and his honest eyes;  
His stammer, his absurdities;  
His marmalade, his bitter beer,  
And all that made him quaint and dear.

And though we muckle have to do  
Yet love must needs come breaking through,  
And now and then the office hum  
Dies like a mist, . . . and there will come  
An Oxford breakfast scene: the quad  
All blue and grey outside—O God—

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## THE WAR

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### TILL TWISTON WENT—(continued)

And there sits Twiston at the feast  
Proclaiming he will be a priest!  
I see his eyes, his homely neb—  
Ring, telephones, and cut the web!

'And when it's over, will there be  
In his grey house above the Dee  
A mug to drain? Will we renew  
The dreams of all we hoped to do?  
Our Cotswold tramps? And will there still  
Be flappers in the surf at Rhyl?  
O how I counted on the hour  
When he would see the Woolworth Tower,  
And how we set our hearts upon  
The steep grey walls of Carcassonne!

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SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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TO RUDYARD KIPLING

For His Fiftieth Birthday  
(December 30, 1915)

LORD of our noble English tongue,  
Who holdest seizin of our speech,  
Whose epic Mowgli first did reach  
The valves of all our hearts when young—

Master of every grace and ire,  
Wide as the salt-winged fulmar gulls  
That circle England's battle hulls,  
Your songs have fanned the Imperial fire.

By Oak and Ash and Thorn, by all  
Old memories of Sussex sod,  
To you we pile the altar clod  
And ask a new Recessional.

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## THE WAR

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### TO A U-BOAT

With Apologies to William Blake

**T**IGER, tiger of the seas,  
King of scarlet butcheries,  
What infernal hand and eye  
Planned your dread machinery?

Men of Hamburg, Bremen, Kiel,  
Watch the gauge and turn the wheel,  
Proud, perhaps, to have defiled  
Oceans, to destroy a child.

With your thunderbolt you strike  
Cargo, women, all alike—  
Stain with red God's clean green sea,  
Call it "naval victor"

U-boat, U-boat, as you grope  
With your half-blind periscope,  
Lo, your hateful trail we mark,  
Send you to your kin, the shark!

### KITCHENER

**N**O man in England slept, the night he died:  
The harsh, stern spirit passed without a pang,  
And freed of mortal clogs his message rang.  
In every wakeful mind the challenge cried:  
*Think not of me: one servant less or more*  
*Means nothing now: hold fast the greater thing—*  
*Strike hard, love truth, serve England and the King!*

Servant of England, soldier to the core,  
What does it matter where his body fall?  
What does it matter where they build the tomb?  
Five million men, from Calais to Khartoum,  
These are his wreath and his memorial.

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THE WAR

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MARCH 1915

*P*USSY willow, pussy willow  
Do you bloom in Belgium now?

Tiny furry little catkins  
Where the Meuse runs green and clear,  
Do the children run to pick you  
In this springtime of the year?  
Do they stroke you and caress you  
Kiss the silky balls of fur,  
Take you to the priest to bless you  
And pretend to hear you purr?  
Do their small hot fingers wilt you?  
(Sweethearts, you remember how—)

*Pussy willow, pussy willow,  
Do you bloom in Belgium now?*

### DEAD SHIPS

WE are not sudden haters; but by dint  
Of many horrors all our hearts are quick.  
We are not ready writers, with the trick  
Of rhyming just to see our words in print.  
Nor are we fast forgetters: there remain  
Bitter and shameful in our memory  
Old murders that made horrible the sea  
And tinged clean water with a red, red stain.  
*Titanic*: she went down for love of speed;  
The *Eastland*—curse her!—just for dirty greed;  
But there are ships whose names are yet more rank.  
The years have passed, but still our hearts are sick  
To think of the cool cruelty that sank  
The *Lusitania* and the *Arabic*.

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## THE WAR

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ENGLAND, JULY 1913

To Rupert Brooke

O ENGLAND, England . . . that July  
How placidly the days went by!

Two years ago (how long it seems)  
In that dear England of my dreams  
I loved and smoked and laughed amain  
And rode to Cambridge in the rain.  
A careless godlike life was there!  
To spin the roads with *Shotover*,  
To dream while punting on the Cam,  
To lie, and never give a damn  
For anything but comradeship  
And books to read and ale to sip,  
And shandygaff at every inn  
When *The Gorilla* rode to Lynn!  
O world of wheel and pipe and oar  
In those old days before the War.  
O poignant echoes of that time!  
I hear the Oxford towers chime,

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SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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ENGLAND, JULY 1913—(continued)

The throbbing of those mellow bells  
And all the sweet old English smells—  
The Deben water, quick with salt,  
The Woodbridge brew-house and the malt;  
The Suffolk villages, serene  
With lads at cricket on the green,  
And Wytham strawberries, so ripe,  
And *Murray's Mixture* in my pipe!

In those dear days, in those dear days,  
All pleasant lay the country ways;  
The echoes of our stalwart mirth  
Went echoing wide around the earth  
And in an endless bliss of sun  
We lay and watched the river run.  
And you by Cam and I by Isis  
Were happy with our own devices.

'Ah, can we ever know again  
Such friends as were those chosen men,  
Such men to drink, to bike, to smoke with,  
To worship with, or lie and joke with?  
Never again, my lads, we'll see  
The life we led at twenty-three.

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## THE WAR

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ENGLAND, JULY 1918—(continued)

Never again, perhaps, shall I  
Go flashing bravely down the High  
To see, in that transcendent hour,  
The sunset glow on Magdalen Tower.

Dear Rupert Brooke, your words recall  
Those endless afternoons, and all  
Your Cambridge—which I loved as one  
Who was her grandson, not her son.  
O ripples where the river slacks  
In greening eddies round the “backs”;  
Where men have dreamed such gallant things  
Under the old stone bridge at *King's*,  
Or leaned to feed the silver swans  
By the tennis meads at *John's*.  
O Granta's water, cold and fresh,  
Kissing the warm and eager flesh  
Under the willow's breathing stir—  
The bathing pool at *Grantchester*. . . .  
What words can tell, what words can praise  
The burly savour of those days!

Dear singing lad, those days are dead  
And gone for aye your golden head;

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SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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ENGLAND, JULY 1913—(continued)

And many other well-loved men  
Will never dine in Hall again.  
I too have lived remembered hours  
In Cambridge; heard the summer showers  
Make music on old *Heffer's* pane  
While I was reading Pepys or Taine.  
Through *Trumpington* and *Grantchester*  
I used to roll on *Shotover*;  
'At *Hauxton Bridge* my lamp would light  
And sleep in *Royston* for the night.  
Or to *Five Miles from Anywhere*  
I used to scull; and sit and swear  
While wasps attacked my bread and jam  
Those summer evenings on the Cam.  
(O crispy English cottage-loaves  
Baked in ovens, not in stoves!  
O white unsalted English butter  
O satisfaction none can utter!) . . .

To think that while those joys I knew  
In Cambridge, I did not know you.

*July 1915.*

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## THE WAR

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### TO THE OXFORD MEN IN THE WAR

OFTEN, on afternoons grey and sombre,  
When clouds lie low and dark with rain,  
A random bell strikes a chord familiar  
And I hear the Oxford chimes again.  
Never I see a swift stream running  
Cold and full from shore to shore,  
But I think of Isis, and remember  
The leaping boat and the throbbing oar.

O my brothers, my more than brothers—  
Lost and gone are those days indeed:  
Where are the bells, the gowns, the voices,  
All that made us one blood and breed?  
Gone—and in many an unknown pitfall  
You have swinked, and died like men—  
And here I sit in a quiet chamber  
Writing on paper with a pen.

O my brothers, my more than brothers—  
Big, intolerant, gallant boys!

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SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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TO THE OXFORD MEN IN THE WAR—(contin'd)

Going to war as into a boatrace,  
Full of laughter and fond of noise!  
I can imagine your smile: how eager,  
Nervous for the suspense to be done—  
And I remember the Iffley meadows,  
The crew alert for the starting gun.

Old grey city, O dear grey city,  
How young we were, and how close to Truth!  
We envied no one, we hated no one,  
All was magical to our youth.  
Still, in the hall of the Triple Roses,  
The cannel casts its ruddy span,  
And still the garden gate discloses  
The message *Manners Makyth Man*.

Then I recall that an Oxford college,  
Setting a stone for those who have died,  
Nobly remembered all her children—  
Even those on the German side.  
That was Oxford! and that was England!  
Fight your enemy, fight him square;  
But in justice, honour, and pity  
Even the enemy has his share.

*November 1916.*

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## THE WAR

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### FOR THE PRESENT TIME

“If the trumpet speak with an uncertain sound,  
Who shall prepare himself for the battle?”

**I**N all this time of agony  
How does this mighty nation drift:  
Our blood is red upon the sea,  
The foe is merciless and swift.  
We doubt, we sway,  
And day by day  
Our hearts are thicker with distrust. . . .  
We would, should, could, can, may—we must!

So many divers voices call,  
And cloud our souls with dull dismay:  
**O** when shall cry, clear over all,  
The Voice that none can disobey?  
My country, speak!  
In no oblique  
Uncertain tone; be this our cry:  
If Honour is not ours, we die.

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SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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FOR THE PRESENT TIME—(continued)

My country, speak! They lie who say  
That we are soft with love of home;  
For still, in all the ancient way,  
Our ships shall kiss the perilled foam.  
Yea, slow to wrath,  
But lo, our path  
Leads straight at last, and blithe to tread:  
We shall live better, having bled.

*March 1917.*

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## THE WAR

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AMERICA, 1917

DYNAMO of strength uncurbed,  
Boundless might, undisciplined;  
Energies still undisturbed,  
Power, unharnessed as the wind—

Huge, inchoate commonweal,  
Lo, at last we catch the thrill:  
Now we found and forge the steel,  
Scoop a channel for the will.

Here we stand; and destiny  
Now admits us no retreat:  
Hearts are braced from sea to sea,  
*Hark! I hear the marching feet!*

Hills are moved; streams faster run;  
Plumper kernels fill the wheat,  
Now we dream and do as one. . . .  
*Hark! I hear the marching feet!*

*March 1917.*

### ON VIMY RIDGE

“The Stars and Stripes went into battle at Vimy Ridge on the bayonet of a young Texan, fighting with a Canadian regiment.”—News item.

**O**N Vimy Ridge the Flag renewed  
Her youth: the thunder of the guns  
Recalled the crimson plenitude  
Shed by her ancient sons.

Once more her white and scarlet bands  
Were new-baptized with battle sweat:  
She felt the clutch of desperate hands,  
The push of bayonet.

Across that bloody snarl of wire  
Her colors blossomed clean as flame:  
The Bride of Glory, in desire  
To meet her groom she came.

The lightning in her folds she kept,  
The sky, the stars, the dew—  
Impassioned, in her youth she swept  
On Vimy, born anew!

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HAY FEVER, AND OTHER LITERARY  
POLLEN

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## HAY FEVER, AND OTHER LITERARY POLLEN

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### HAY FEVER

#### If Rudyard Kipling Had It

IF you can face a ragweed without sneezing  
And walk undaunted past a stack of hay;  
If you can find a field of daisies pleasing,  
And not require ten handkerchiefs a day;  
If you can stroll in meadowland and orchard  
And greet the goldenrod with gay surprise,  
And not be most abominably tortured  
By swollen nose and bloodshot, flaming eyes;  
If you can go on sneezing like a geyser  
And never utter one unmeasured curse;  
If you can squeeze the useless atomiser  
Nor look with envy on each passing hearse;  
If you can still be merry in September,  
And not lay plans to drown yourself in drink,  
Then your career is something to remember,  
And you deserve an Iron Cross, I think!

HAY FEVER

If Amy Lowell Had It

**F**AR away  
In the third-floor-back of my skull  
I feel a light, airy, prurient, menacing tickling,  
Dainty as the pattering toes of nautch girls  
On a polished cabaret floor.  
Suddenly,  
With a crescendo like an approaching ex-  
press train,  
The fury bursts upon me. . . .  
My brain explodes.  
Pinwheels of violet fire  
Whirl and spin before my bloodshot eyes—  
Violet, puce, ochre, nacre, euchre . . . all  
the other  
Colours,  
Including jade, umber and sienna.  
My ears ring, my soul reels.

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## HAY FEVER, AND OTHER LITERARY POLLEN

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### HAY FEVER IF AMY LOWELL HAD IT—(cont'd)

I tingle with agony.  
Who invented goldenrod?  
I wish I were dead.  
Aaaaaaarrrrrrhhhaashoooo!

### HAY FEVER

#### If Hilaire Belloc Had It

WITH this handkerchief and this nose  
Seven million separate blows  
Neighed I, brayed I, sobbed I, blew I,  
Snorted I, wept I, mopped I, crew I,  
Tickled I, prickled I, groaned and moaned I,  
And for all my sins atoned I;  
Raged I, sniffled I, and exploded,  
And a speedy death foreboded,  
Swayed I, prayed I, shook I, shouted I,  
To expensive doctors touted I,  
Gobbled I, hobbled I, atomised I,  
Cursed I and philosophised I,  
Worked I, shirked I, lay and lurked I,  
And in horrid spasms jerked I,  
Camphored, menthol'd, and cold creamed I  
And asthmatic nightmares dreamed I,  
Those who hate me highly pleased I,  
And—I'll not conceal it—  
SNEEZED I!

## HAY FEVER

### If Edgar Lee Masters Had It

ED GRIMES always did hate me  
Because I wrote better poetry than he did.  
In the hay fever season I used to walk  
Along the river bank, to keep as far as possible  
Away from pollen.  
One day Ed and his brother crept up behind me  
While I was writing a sonnet,  
Tied my hands and feet,  
And carried me into a hayfield and left me.  
I sneezed myself to death.  
At the funeral the church was full of goldenrod,  
And I think it must have been Ed  
Who sowed that ragweed all round my grave.

HYMN TO THE DAIRYMAIDS  
ON BEACON STREET

**S**WEETLY solemn see them stand,  
Spinning churns on either hand,  
Neatly capped and aproned white—  
Airy fairy dairy sight!  
Jersey priestesses they seem  
Miracleing milk to cream.

Cream solidifies to cheese  
By Pasteural mysteries,  
And they give, within their shrine,  
Their communion in kine.

Incantations pure they mutter  
O'er the golden minted butter  
And (no layman hand can pen it)  
See them gloat above their rennet!

By that hillside window pane  
Rugged teamsters draw the rein,  
Doff the battered hat and bow  
To these acolytes of cow.

HYMN TO THE DAIRYMAIDS OF BEACON  
STREET—(continued)

Genuflect, ye passersby!  
Muse upon their ritual high—  
Milk to cream, yea, cream to cheese  
White lacteal mysteries!  
Let adorers sing the word  
Of the smoothly flowing curd.  
Yea, we sing with bells and fife  
This is the Whey, this is the Life!

ON FIRST LOOKING INTO A SUBWAY  
EXCAVATION

MUCH have I travelled, a commuter bold,  
And many goodly excavations seen;  
Round many miles of planking have I been  
Which wops in fealty to contractors hold.  
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told  
Where dynamite had swept the traffic clean,  
And every passer-by must duck his bean  
Or flying rocks would lay him stiff and cold.  
As I was crossing Broadway, with surprise  
I held my breath and improvised a prayer:  
I saw the solid street before me rise  
And men and trolleys leap into the air.  
I gazed into the pit with doubtful eyes,  
Silent upon a peak in Herald Square.

### BALLAD OF NEW AMSTERDAM

**T**HREE are no bowls on Bowling Green,  
No maids in Maiden lane;  
The river path to Greenwich  
No longer doth remain.  
No longer in the Bouwerie  
Stands Peter Stuyvesant his tree!

And yet the Dutchmen built their dorp  
With sturdy wit and will;  
In Nassau street their spectral feet  
Are heard to echo still.  
In many places sure I am  
New York is still Nieuw Amsterdam.

Sometimes at night in Bowling Green  
There comes a rumbling sound,  
Which literal minds are wont to think  
The Subway. But I found  
That still the Dutchmen ease their souls  
By playing ghostly games of bowls!

### CASUALTY

**A** WELL-sharp'd pencil leads one on to write:  
When guns are cocked, the shot is guaranteed;  
The primed occasion puts the deed in sight:  
Who steals a book who knows not how to read?

Seeing a pulpit, who can silence keep?  
A maid, who would not dream her ta'en to wife?  
Men looking down from some sheer dizzy steep  
Have (quite impromptu) leapt, and ended life.

## AT THE WOMEN'S CLUBS

A representation of what happens when Mr. Dunraven Dulcet, the gifted poet, reads some of his verses to an audience of two hundred ladies and one man. After Mr. Dulcet has been introduced, and after he has expressed his mortification (or is it gratification?) at Madam Chairman's kind remarks, he proceeds as follows. The comments of his audience are indicated in italics.

**R**OMANCE abides in humble things:—  
How commonplace the precious ore!  
The shining vision sometimes springs

*The one man:*

*From too much cheese the night before!*

The man who seeks the True Romance  
Among the high aristocrats,  
Forgets the crowning circumstance

*Mrs. Smith:*

*My dear, he wears the sweetest spats!*

Some little gutter-dabbling child,  
Some shabby clerk whom all despise—  
On him Olympus may have smiled

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## SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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### AT THE WOMEN'S CLUBS—(continued)

*Mrs. Brown:*

*He has those dark romantic eyes!*

Some shimmer from the lusted dawn  
Of hitherto unguessed to-morrows,  
Imperishable laurels drawn

*Mrs. Jones:*

*I think he must have secret sorrows!*

Immeasurable arcs of sky,  
Vast spaces where the great winds shout,  
His eye must pierce, his hand must try. . . .

*Mrs. Robinson:*

*Too bad that he is growing stout!*

His heart is like a parchment scroll  
Whereon the beautiful, the true,  
Are registered; and in his soul

*Mrs. Smith:*

*I do love poetry, don't you?*

Romance abides in humble things,  
And humble people understand  
That feathers from an angel's wings

*Mrs. Brown:*

*I must just go and shake his hand!*

### ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY COAL-BIN

THE furnace tolls the knell of falling steam,  
The coal supply is virtually done,  
And at this price, indeed it does not seem  
As though we could afford another ton.

Now fades the glossy, cherished anthracite;  
The radiators lose their temperature:  
How ill avail, on such a frosty night,  
The “short and simple flannels of the poor.”

Though in the ice-box, fresh and newly laid,  
The rude forefathers of the omelet sleep,  
No eggs for breakfast till the bill is paid:  
We cannot cook again till coal is cheap.

Can Morris-chair or papier-mâché bust  
Revivify the failing pressure-gauge?  
Chop up the grand piano if you must,  
And burn the East Aurora parrot-cage!

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SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY COAL-BIN—  
(continued)

Full many a can of purest kerosene  
The dark unfathomed tanks of Standard Oil  
Shall furnish me, and with their aid I mean  
To bring my morning coffee to a boil.

The village collier (flinty-hearted beast)  
Who tried to hold me up in such a pinch  
May soon be numbered with the dear deceased:  
I give him to the mercy of Judge Lynch.

### MOONS WE SAW AT SEVENTEEN

AUGUST casts her burning spell:  
One vast sapphire is the sky;  
Woods still have their musky smell,  
By the pool the dragon fly  
Like a jewelled scarf-pin glows.  
Doris, Vera, and Kathleen—  
Where are they? and where are those  
Moons we saw at seventeen?

Bright as amber, and as round  
As a new engagement ring—  
(So we murmured, gently bound  
To some flapper's leading string.)  
Sweet and witless repartee:  
Perilous canoes careen—  
Telescopes would split, to see  
MOONS we saw at seventeen!

### 'AT THE DOG SHOW

#### To an Irish Wolf Hound

LONG and grey and gaunt he lies,  
A Lincoln among dogs; his eyes,  
Deep and clear of sight, appraise  
The meaningless and shuffling ways  
Of human folk that stop to stare.  
One witless woman seeing there  
How tired, how contemptuous  
He is of all the smell and fuss  
Asks him, "Poor fellow, are you sick?"

Yea, sick, and weary to the quick  
Of heat and noise from dawn to dark.  
He will not even stoop to bark  
His protest, like the lesser bred.  
Would he might know, one gazer read  
The wistful longing in his face,  
The thirst for wind and open space  
And stretch of limbs to him begrudging.

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## HAY FEVER, AND OTHER LITERARY POLLEN

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### AT THE DOG SHOW—(continued)

There came a little, dapper, fat  
And bustling man, with cane and spat  
And pearl-grey vest and derby hat—  
Such were the judger and the judged!

### THE OLD SWIMMER

I OFTEN wander on the beach  
Where once, so brown of limb,  
The biting air, the roaring surf  
Summoned me to swim.

I see my old abundant youth  
Where combers lean and spill,  
And though I taste the foam no more  
Other swimmers will.

Oh, good exultant strength to meet  
The arching wall of green,  
To break the crystal, swirl, emerge  
Dripping, taut, and clean.

To climb the moving hilly blue,  
To dive in ecstasy  
And feel the salty chill embrace  
Arm and rib and knee.

THE OLD SWIMMER—(continued)

What brave and vanished laughter then  
And tingling thighs to run,  
What warm and comfortable sands  
Dreaming in the sun.

The crumbling water spreads in snow,  
The surf is hissing still,  
And though I kiss the salt no more  
Other swimmers will.

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## SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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### TO ALL MY FRIENDS

“There’s nothing worth the wear of winning  
But laughter and the love of friends.”

—*Hilaire Belloc.*

**I**F those who have been kind to me  
Should ever chance these rhymes to see;  
Then let them know, upon the spot,  
Their kindnesses are not forgot!

If any worthy task was done,  
The acts were never mine, not one:  
For parent, teacher, wife or friend  
Inspired the will, foresaw the end.

What sorrows do our friends avert!  
How loyal, far beyond desert!  
And yet how churlish, dumb and crude  
Are all our words of gratitude.

Then O remember, *you* and *you*,  
My old familiars, leal and true—  
The love that bonded you and me  
Is not forgot, will never be!

### A GRUB STREET RECESSIONAL

**O** NOBLE gracious English tongue  
Whose fibres we so sadly twist,  
For caitiff measures he has sung  
Have pardon on the journalist.

For mumbled metre, leaden pun,  
For slipshod rhyme, and lazy word,  
Have pity on this graceless one—  
Thy mercy on Thy servant, Lord!

The metaphors and tropes depart,  
Our little clippings fade and bleach:  
There is no virtue and no art  
Save in straightforward Saxon speech.

Yet not in ignorance or spite,  
Nor with Thy noble past forgot  
We sinned: indeed we had to write  
To keep a fire beneath the pot.

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SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

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A GRUB STREET RECESSIONAL—(continued)

Then grant that in the coming time,  
With inky hand and polished sleeve,  
In lucid prose or honest rhyme  
Some worthy task we may achieve—

Some pinnacled and marbled phrase,  
Some lyric, breaking like the sea,  
That we may learn, not hoping praise,  
The gift of Thy simplicity.













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